



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

## Transportation Advisory Commission

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(Fairfax Area Disability Services Board)

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## Fairfax County Transportation Advisory Commission

Our mission as the Transportation Advisory Commission (“the TAC”) is to advise the Board of Supervisors and provide information and comments on major transportation issues faced by the County. Taking seriously our role as transportation advocates for all of the County’s residents, we have identified a need to bring greater thought and consideration to issues relating to the accessibility of public transportation to the County’s growing and most vulnerable population – our disabled residents, including handicapped persons, the frail and elderly, and all others with impairments who have difficulty navigating the County’s transportation systems.

To encourage the County’s disabled residents to be actively involved in their communities, maintain productive roles in the economy, and have access to the full range of facilities and services needed to lead enjoyable and fulfilling lives, we, the TAC, do hereby respectfully recommend that the Board approve our establishment and implementation of a “Commonsense Accessibility Initiative” (attached) dedicated to improving public transportation options for the County's disabled residents.

Janyce Hedetniemi, Chair

Transportation Advisory Commission

# ***COMMONSENSE ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVE***

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### INTRODUCTION

Fairfax County is home to a considerably large, and growing, disabled population. Conservative estimates show that persons with disabilities now account for over 11% of the County's population. Further, all indications – such as the County's rapidly aging population and the increase in war veterans returning home – point to a likely expansion of this segment of the population in the coming years.

Public transportation is a vital link connecting the County's disabled population to basic living services. Without accessible public transportation, our disabled population would lose their independence, as well as their ability to enjoy and participate in the many aspects of County life, including work, commerce and leisure activities.

### THE INITIATIVE

Consistent with its name, and in recognition of budget constraints, the Commonsense Accessibility Initiative (or "CSA Initiative") will seek to improve the overall accessibility of public transportation to the County's disabled residents by exploring "commonsense" ways to use and allocate available resources to these dual goals:

1) Expand and improve existing communication and learning tools offered to disabled residents to inform them of their public transportation options.

2) Plan and prioritize existing and future structural improvement projects necessary to ensuring disabled access to public transportation facilities and critical County locations.

The CSA Initiative will also permit the TAC to draw on the collective transportation experience and expertise of its membership to support the efforts of other County agencies responsible for providing services to disabled and aging residents.

## COMMONSENSE ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVE

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#### *Improving Communication and Learning Tools*

Educating disabled persons as to their current public transportation options, as well as how to effectively utilize those options, is a critical, commonsense step toward improving the accessibility of public transportation by the County's disabled population. As part of the CSA Initiative, the TAC will review and explore ways to enhance and improve the many tools currently utilized by the County to communicate with and educate the disabled population on transportation options, such as the County's online technologies, and information and complaint hotlines.

#### *Prioritizing Existing Structural Improvement Projects*

There are many persons with disabilities who understand well their available public transportation options and, yet, are foreclosed from using those options because their public transportation facilities are in disrepair. As part of the CSA Initiative, the TAC will explore ways to improve the County's processes for prioritizing existing public transportation repair projects to facilitate access by disabled residents.

#### *Planning for New Infrastructure Improvements*

Finally, while the County has taken great strides toward making public transportation accessible and effective for its disabled residents, there are still many critical locations that are not accessible to our disabled population via public transportation. As part of the CSA Initiative, the TAC will be an advocate in the County's continuing consideration of new public transportation projects essential to meeting the basic needs of the disabled population.

### CONCLUSION

Access to basic living services, taken for granted by the able-bodied person, can become problematic for the disabled person who has limited or no access to public transportation. Through this proposed CSA Initiative, we, the TAC, seek to assist the Board and County staff in continuing to improve the lives of the County's disabled residents by ensuring that they have appropriate access to vital public transportation services and that county policies and procedures proactively support this effort.